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ABSTRACT

In Part I of this section of the guide, the agency is asked to set down a clear and comprehensive statement of its philosophy of service and program objectives. Part II calls for basic factual data concerning the agency and the community it serves. Part III seeks to ascertain the agency's policies with respect to certain principles adopted by the National Accreditation Council on the subjects of confidentiality, fees and non-discrimination. Part IV inquires into the agency's efforts to evaluate the long-range outcome of its services. (Other sections of the guide are available as LI 003342 and LI 003344 through LI 003351). (Author/NH)

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Section B

SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE | 1968 Edition

Agency and Community Profile

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION COUNCIL
For Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped
79 Madison Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10016

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LI 003 343

INSTRUCTIONS

In preparing this Section of the self-study report, please note on page 3 the documents which should be appended to provide basic data concerning the agency.

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This section of the *SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE* is designed for use in conjunction with the other sections listed below. Any agency* undertaking a self-study will need the first seven sections listed below plus all *D* sections pertaining to the agency's services, an *E* form for each administrative, professional, and technical staff member, and the evaluation summary and report section.

The *GUIDE* is available either in a complete, bound edition or in separate sections from the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped, 79 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.

SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE

Section	Title
A	Manual of Procedures
B	Agency and Community Profile
C-1	Agency Function and Structure
C-2	Financial Accounting and Service Reporting
C-3	Personnel Administration and Volunteer Service
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D-5	Social Services
D-6	Vocational Services
D-7	Production of Reading Materials
E	Individual Staff Member Information Form
F	Evaluation Summary and Report

*Special guides are available for agencies providing *only* sheltered workshop services (*SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE FOR SHELTERED WORKSHOPS*) and for residential schools (*SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE FOR RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS*).

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SECTION B

AGENCY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Guiding Principles

In this section of the *Self-Study and Evaluation Guide,* the agency is called upon to provide information which reflects both its fundamental beliefs and purposes and the setting in which it strives to achieve them.

The section consists of four parts. In Part I the agency is asked to set down a clear and comprehensive statement of its philosophy of service and program objectives. Part II calls for basic factual data concerning the agency and the community it serves. Part III seeks to ascertain the agency's policies with respect to certain principles adopted by the National Accreditation Council on the subjects of confidentiality, fees and non-discrimination. Part IV inquires into the agency's efforts to evaluate the long-range outcome of its services.

In a complex society where no group can attempt to be all things to all men, every agency necessarily evolves a set of goals and a set of limits within which it operates. Such goals and limitations are determined by both tangible and intangible factors. The tangible factors may be the agency's financial strength, its personnel resources, the size and needs of the area it serves, the existence or absence of collateral services in the area. No less significant, albeit in the realm of the intangible, is the organization's philosophy of service.

A deliberately simplified example will illustrate the point. An agency which confines its activities to vocational services and a sheltered workshop may be doing so for the very tangible reason that other agencies in the area provide adequately for other needs of the age group it serves. On the other hand, the agency may have chosen to confine its efforts to providing these particular services because of the conviction that while there may be other important needs to be met, it is most essential in a work-oriented society that an opportunity for constructive employment be provided to the visually handicapped. The former reasoning rests on a tangible base, the latter on a conscious philosophy of service. Whatever the base, it is a meaningful factor in any evaluation of the agency and its work.

I. PHILOSOPHY OF SERVICE AND PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

It is evident that no two organizations whether under voluntary or governmental auspices are, or can be, alike. Differing surroundings, differing local pressures, differing histories and patterns of development—all these play a role in giving each agency a unique and distinctive character. For example, state agencies such as those which administer federal-state rehabilitation programs have much in common, but also differ from one another in fundamental ways.

The purpose of drawing up a statement delineating the agency's philosophy of service and program objectives is to permit this basic frame of reference within which the agency operates to emerge in sufficiently well-defined terms for the document to serve as a tool in evaluating the agency's performance. In both the self-study process and the on-site review for accreditation, evaluators will necessarily take into account both the standards formulated by the National Accreditation Council and the agency's specific and self-determined purpose and goals as set forth in its statement of philosophy and objectives.

How does an agency go about developing such a statement? One way to begin is to consult a primary source: the charter, articles of incorporation or by-laws in the case of a voluntary agency; the enabling legislation or administrative regulations in the case of a public agency.

These, however, are apt to be couched in extremely broad terms. A terse, concrete description illuminating the agency's purposes and goals is more apt to be found in an annual report, a descriptive brochure, a staff or board manual, or an official report to a public regulatory body or a central funding organization.

Using one or more of these as a starting point, the agency can then proceed to round out its statement by examining the basic purpose and analyzing the rationale for its particular program. This will involve thoughtful consideration of such matters as:

—The specific subgroup of the blind population the agency has chosen to serve, and the reasons for this choice.
—The particular client needs the agency attempts to meet, the priority it assigns to some of these needs as against others, and the rationale underlying these decisions.
—The degree of responsibility the agency feels it should assume in helping clients find resources to meet needs outside its own province.
—The role that the agency feels it appropriate to undertake with respect to the unmet needs of blind and visually handicapped people in its community.
—The degree to which the agency believes it should share responsibility for the client's total development with the client himself, with his family, with other agencies.
—The nature and extent of the agency's working partnerships with other community organizations in the provision of services to blind and visually handicapped people.
—The agency's attitude toward participation by clients in shaping agency policies and programs, and the provisions, if any, that have been made for such participation.
—The extent to which the agency believes it should consult with community planning bodies on decisions involving major program changes.
—The role the agency sees for itself in inculcating more affirmative public attitudes toward blindness.

These and comparable considerations are touchstones which reveal the nature of an agency's philosophy of service and the direction of its program objectives. The self-study group which undertakes to examine them will find many unexpected rewards in the form of new insights and a clearer sense of direction.

The statement of philosophy and objectives which results from this process need be neither lengthy nor detailed; its purpose is solely to reflect the essence of the agency's fundamental beliefs, values and goals.

An initial draft drawn up by the self-study group can profitably serve as a basis for thought-stimulating discussions by board and staff, which in turn may lead to further refinements and clarifications. The achievement of consensus may then be formalized by action of the board in adoption of the statement as the agency's official aims.

In appending the statement to this section, an indication should be made of whether and when its contents were formally approved by the governing body.

II. THE AGENCY IN ITS COMMUNITY SETTING

To make a proper assessment of the extent to which an agency meets its stated aims, it is necessary to understand the community factors which have a bearing on the agency's program. The information called for in the succeeding pages is designed to relate the agency to its setting by means of data describing:

A. The structure, organization and personnel resources of the agency.
B. The population characteristics of the area served.
C. The numbers, needs and distribution of blind and visually handicapped persons in this area.

D. The resources available in the community for services in behalf of blind and visually handicapped persons - services rendered either independently or in cooperation with the agency.

The population data requested under B and C is available in most communities, although not necessarily in complete or up-to-date form. One of the judgments the self-study committee will have to make is whether to use imperfect data readily on hand, or to seek more current, more accurate information. For example, data from the last decennial Federal census is easily obtained: though old, it may still be more or less valid in those communities which have not undergone major population shifts in recent years. In others, however, it may be deemed so out of date as to be relatively useless. In such instances, there are apt to exist more recent estimates, made locally, which offer a truer picture.

In supplying data for this part of *Section B*, tables and charts may be added, altered or expanded as appropriate; questions or tables that call for data not applicable to the agency or its community may be omitted or revised to fit the particular situation.

The task of choosing what material to supply will be simplified if the self-study group working on this section bears constantly in mind that the sole object of the data is to present a clear profile of the community factors which relate to the agency's operations.

A. The Agency

1. *Basic Data.* Basic data concerning the agency will be found in the following documents, which should be appended to the end of this section as part of the self-study. Most of these documents are probably already on hand in prepared form; there should prove to be little difficulty in drawing up the additional information required.

—Pertinent excerpts from, or the full text of, the agency's charter, articles of incorporation, by-laws, or enabling legislation.
—A list or brief description of the services provided by the agency.
—A list or brief description of the location of each agency facility or service unit.
—A brief history of the agency (preferably no longer than one double-spaced typewritten page).
—The latest annual report.
—The latest audited financial statement.
—The agency's current budget.
—An organizational chart, if available.
—A list of the names and titles of administrative and supervisory personnel.
—A list of members of the governing or advisory board.
—Statement of philosophy of service and program objectives.

2. *Personnel Data.* What is sought here is not the detailed, person-by-person description called for in *Section E*, but an overall picture of the number and categories of paid staff and service volunteers, to portray the total personnel resources available to the agency. Should the agency's data about employees and volunteers be kept in a form not compatible with the following tables, the latter may be changed as needed, or other data kept by the agency may be substituted.

Table 1

Agency Employees, Full-Time and Part-Time

Date _____

Title	Number of Staff Positions Filled		Number of Staff Positions Budgeted But Unfilled	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Administrator(s)*				
Librarians				
Physicians				
Optometrists				
Orientation and Mobility Instructors				
Psychologists				
Psychometrists				
Recreation Workers				
Recreation Assistants				
Social Workers				
Social Work Assistants				
Supervisors of Business Enterprises				
Teachers (specify type)				
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors				
Volunteer Service Directors & Supervisors				
Workshop Managers and Supervisors				
Secretaries				
Clerks				
Service Personnel				
Custodians and Maintenance Personnel				
Other (specify)				
Total				

*List the director of a professional service, e.g., psychology, social work, vocational rehabilitation counseling, under the professional category rather than administrator.

If the agency utilizes service volunteers in its program, other than those who serve solely on the board or policy-making committees, please provide any of the following information which can conveniently be drawn from routine records of volunteer activities.

The total number of service volunteers (unduplicated count) who contributed time to agency activities during the period _____ to _____ (specify a reasonably typical period, such as a given month) was _____. Of these, _____ volunteers served on a regularly scheduled basis (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.).

Table 2

Use of Service Volunteers

Period: _____ to _____

Name of Service, Department or Program Activity to Which Volunteers were Assigned	Number of Volunteers Assigned

B. The Community Served

1. What is the geographic area (towns, cities, counties or states, etc.) served by the agency?

2. What is the total population of the area served by the agency?

Source and date of population data: _____

_____

_____

3. The age distribution of the population in the area served is:

Table 3

Age Group *	Number	Percent
Under 5		
5–19		
20–44		
45–64		
65–74		
75 and over		
Total		100.0

*If data is kept according to other age groupings, these may be substituted.

4. (For agencies that serve large geographic areas.)
What is the rural-urban distribution of population in the area served?

5. Are there any important population characteristics in the community served which affect the agency and its services? Briefly describe any such social, economic, racial, ethnic, mobility or other pertinent factors.

6. Are any basic changes anticipated in the size or characteristics of population in the area served which may affect the nature of the agency's services? If so, what are they?

7. What changes, if any does the agency contemplate making in relation to geographic area served?

C. The Blind and Visually Handicapped Population

1. Every agency working in the field of blindness has a natural interest in knowing the number and age distribution of blind and visually handicapped persons living in the community it serves. While no universally accepted method for determining the size of this population has been developed, most agencies make some attempt at an estimate. In the absence of such a locally-determined estimate, the agency may apply the rate of prevalence of legal blindness for its state as given in the most recent edition of *Estimated Statistics on Blindness and Vision Problems*, published by the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, 79 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.

Unless otherwise specified, it will be assumed that the following definition of blindness was used in making the estimate:

> Central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, with corrective glasses; or central visual acuity of more than 20/200 if there is a field defect in which the peripheral field has been contracted to an extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance of no greater than 20 degrees.

Table 4

Estimated Number of Blind and Visually Handicapped Persons in the Area Served by the Agency as of

_____

(Date)

Age Group* (in years)	Estimated Number	Percent
Under 5		
5–19		
20–44		
45–64		
65–74		
75 and over		
Total		100.0

*If available data is kept according to other age groupings, these may be substituted.

2. What was the basis used for the foregoing estimate?

3. In Table 5, the agency is asked to indicate the number of persons it has served during a given period, such as a typical month, classified according to age and sex. Insofar as possible, this should represent an unduplicated count of persons who received at least one direct service during the period specified. If the data maintained on services rendered does not easily lend itself to such a statistical analysis, the agency may substitute any data of a comparable nature it may have compiled.

Table 5

Blind and Visually Handicapped Persons Served by the Agency, Classified by Age and Sex, During Period

_____ to _____

Age Group (in years)	Total	Male	Female
Under 5			
5–19			
20–44			
45–64			
65–74			
75 and over			
Total			

4. Are there any substantive differences between the characteristics (such as age, sex or racial distribution) of the client groups served and those of the estimated blind population in the agency's area of service? If so, describe briefly the factors that account for such differences.

5. Is eligibility for services related to a client's degree of visual impairment? If so, state the eligibility requirements, or attach a copy of the agency's statement of eligibility.

6. How frequently are eye re-examinations required for clients?

7. Is a report on visual impairment included in each client's case record?

8. List below the number of persons served by the agency, classified according to the type of service rendered, for the past year. (If the agency has a service reporting form which provides data of this or a comparable nature, a copy may be attached as the answer to this question.)

D. Community Resources

1. Indicate in Table 6 other community services (governmental or voluntary, local, state or regional) used or needed by the agency to meet basic needs of blind and visually handicapped persons it serves. Use space under *Comments* to call attention to any exceptional circumstances or special needs.

Table 6

Services Available from Other Community Agencies	Regularly Used	Occasionally Used	Never Used	Unavailable
Activities of daily living, personal management and home management	☐	☐	☐	☐
Braille and typing	☐	☐	☐	☐
Diagnosis and evaluation services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Educational services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employment services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group work and recreation services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health and hospital services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Income maintenance	☐	☐	☐	☐
Library services for the blind	☐	☐	☐	☐
Medical eye care	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mental health services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Optical aids services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Orientation and mobility training	☐	☐	☐	☐
Psychological evaluation services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading and writing services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sheltered workshop services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social casework services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vocational evaluation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vocational training	☐	☐	☐	☐
Volunteer services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (specify)				
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

2. Indicate in Table 7 the types of organizations the agency has cooperated with in providing services required by clients. Use space u ıder *Comments* to note any exceptional circumstances or special needs.

Table 7

Organizations Used as Resources	Regularly	Occasionally	Never
Business associations, such as: Chamber of Commerce, Junior Chamber of Commerce, merchants' associations	☐	☐	☐
Cultural organizations, such as: art associations, garden clubs, historical societies	☐	☐	☐
Farm organizations, such as: Farmers' Bureau, Grange, farmers' cooperatives	☐	☐	☐
Labor organizations	☐	☐	☐
Organizations serving specific ethnic or racial groups	☐	☐	☐
Professional organizations	☐	☐	☐
Religious organizations	☐	☐	☐
Service clubs and fraternal organizations	☐	☐	☐
Women's organizations	☐	☐	☐
Veterans' organizations	☐	☐	☐
Other (specify)			
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

III. CONFIDENTIALITY, FEES AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

An agency which exists to serve people in need has special responsibilities to conduct its program with due regard to the best interests of those it serves, and those who serve it, whether paid staff or volunteers. The following sets of principles on confidentiality, service fees and non-discrimination are considered an integral part of all sections of this *Guide*. Judicious consideration of the way in which the agency adheres to these principles is a basic part of a successful self-study.

A. Confidentiality

A productive relationship between a client and the agency which serves him depends on mutual trust. This is engendered by the discreet, disciplined and constructive use by agency staff of confidential information entrusted by the client. Confidential information may be defined as those personal facts or conditions pertaining to the client's life which he has communicated to the agency for definite purposes related to the service he is requesting or receiving from the agency. It is the client's right and expectation that such information will be respected and safeguarded by the agency and all of its personnel: professional, administrative, secretarial and clerical staff; field work students, volunteers.

— Clients have a right to the protection of confidential information about themselves. This right may be superseded only in those exceptional situations (e.g., a court subpoena) where it is necessary to protect the client or others.

— The client is usually the primary source of information about himself; his consent is obtained before information concerning him is sought from other sources.

— Even within the agency, client-entrusted confidences are protected from disclosure to any staff member who is not essential for providing services to the client.

— Confidential information is not communicated to anyone outside the agency without the written consent of the client or other legal authority.

— An agency receiving a confidential report on a client from another agency or individual does not have the right to divulge this information to a third party without securing the client's written permission.

— The use of a case record for research or training purposes is not a breach of confidentiality, provided the identity of the client and his family has been effectively disguised.

— The agency has written statements of policy and procedure governing confidentiality. These serve not only to protect the client but to avoid placing upon staff the full burden of making personal judgments.

— To keep policies alive and effective, these written statements are reviewed periodically.

— Whenever practice regarding confidentiality is amended, the agency redefines its policy and practices in new statements and takes measures to insure that staff has a clear understanding of the changes.

— The agency impresses upon staff members their individual responsibility for maintaining an alert regard for confidentiality in day-to-day practice.

1. Does the agency have written policy statements and procedures governing confidentiality?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

   If yes, briefly indicate whether their provisions adequately cover the principles enumerated in the above statement.

B. Service Fees

Paying for professional services is generally accepted in our culture and is increasingly being put into practice by non-profit organizations. Because a person is blind and needs specialized services, he is not necessarily dependent, seeking special privileges or unable to provide for his own needs.

—It is appropriate to charge a fee for service, except employment, rendered to an individual by an agency. However, within the limitations of agency resources and policy, no services should be denied to anyone unable to pay.

—Payment of fees may be made by the individual or by an agency on his behalf.

—After determining, on a sound accounting basis, the actual costs of service, agencies charging fees should set up a schedule of fees for services with a plan for periodic review.

—The maximum fee should not exceed the actual cost of service; the client or agency using the service has the right to know the actual cost.

—The schedule or sliding scale of fees should be applied by a professional person in consultation with the client and the referral source.

—Clients are not a commodity upon which charges are levied for profit, nor should there be a monetary incentive or rebate for the referral of clients.

—Application of these principles may not interfere with or deprive anyone of his right to free benefits and services provided by law, such as free education, free library service, etc.

1. Does the agency have written policies and procedures governing fees charged for services it provides? Yes ☐ No ☐

   If yes, briefly indicate whether their provisions adequately cover the principles enumerated in the above statement.

C. Non-discrimination

Many state and local laws reinforce and extend the United States Civil Rights Act of 1964, which in Title VI states that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

In most non-profit organizations, the practice of non-discrimination was traditional long before specific statutes were enacted. This practice has extended beyond the factors of race, color and national origin to preclude discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, physical disability, residence, union membership or other affiliations.

The following principles govern the administration and services of community-supported organizations:

- —In all its relations with clients, staff and others, the agency conducts its program and extends its service without discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religious affiliation, ethnic or national origin, age, sex, residence, physical disability, membership in a union or in an organization of which the primary purpose is the improvement of living conditions or human relations.
- —Where religious affiliation, age or sex are clearly relevant to the function of the agency, suitable exceptions may be made.
- —The agency complies with the provisions of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and with other federal, state and local laws and regulations concerning non-discrimination.
- —Membership in the governing body is open to all segments of the public.
- —The principle of non-discrimination applies also the selection and utilization of service volunteers.
- —Non-discrimination is practiced at all meetings, forums, conferences, workshops, institutes or other professional or public activities sponsored by the agency.

1. Please describe briefly the agency's policies and practices relating to its observance of non-discrimination indicating whether these conform to the principles enumerated in the above statement.

2. Where clearly relevant exceptions are made because of religious affiliation, age or sex, please describe these.

IV. LONG-RANGE OUTCOMES

Since blindness itself is usually a lifelong condition, any service, no matter how brief in nature, is apt to have enduring effects in the life of the person served. Increasing emphasis is being placed these days on followup studies to measure the eventual outcome of agency services.

If your agency has ever undertaken any research studies or surveys to measure the effectiveness of its services to clients, please list them below, indicating the date and briefly describing their nature. It is not necessary to describe their findings. If, however, the research is recent and the findings are pertinent to an understanding of the agency's program, a brief summary of the findings may be appended if desired.

Name of Agency _____ Date _____

Completed by[1] _____

_____

_____

_____

[1]List the name and title of the chairman of this committee and those of the other persons, staff, board or other volunteers who worked on completing this section during the self-study.

Look for this Symbol of Quality Service